

Chess Lessons

If you are playing black,
Do not defend, attack!
King's Indian is good, but not the French,
The latter leaves you weak
On the black squares, and eek!
You might well end up fighting in a trench.

Sicilian's not bad,
The Dragon is a fad,
The Najdorf's good, perhaps the Poisoned Pawn?
R. Fischer tried that line
In Reykjavik, it's fine,
Though Spassky made it look somewhat forlorn.

Most players play quite well
The middlegame, and swell
The early stages of the opening,
But often they are weak
At endgames, for technique
Is where the International Masters' king.

Watch out for younger players,
Off' as not, they're real slayers,
Don't go on sorties for material;
Gain time and then convert
Your tempo with a spurt
To something solid, less ephemeral.

Refine your combinations
With subtle innovations,
Play over games by Alekhine and Reti,
Seek inspiration, and
You will improve quite grand,
And give more than you get of check and matey.

Repeat all I have said
Before you go to bed
Each night, and don't forget the major things:
Get castled good and quick,
Don't play for trap or trick,
And stick to solid, king's pawn openings.

Abstain from classics stuff,
They'll land you in the rough,
Don't bring your queen out early or too late,
Put rooks on open files,
Beware of juveniles,
And never miss a check: it might be mate!

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Many thanks to Alexander Baron for sending this poem via e-mail last year. He says: "I wrote this in the eighties but it was published only recently. Do you have a citation for, "Never miss a check: it might be mate!""? I believe it was Blackburne but can't be sure."

Neither can I, but perhaps one of our readers knows the answer. Apologies for the late publication Alexander but it got squeezed out of the last two issues. Anyway, it made the millennial edition!!